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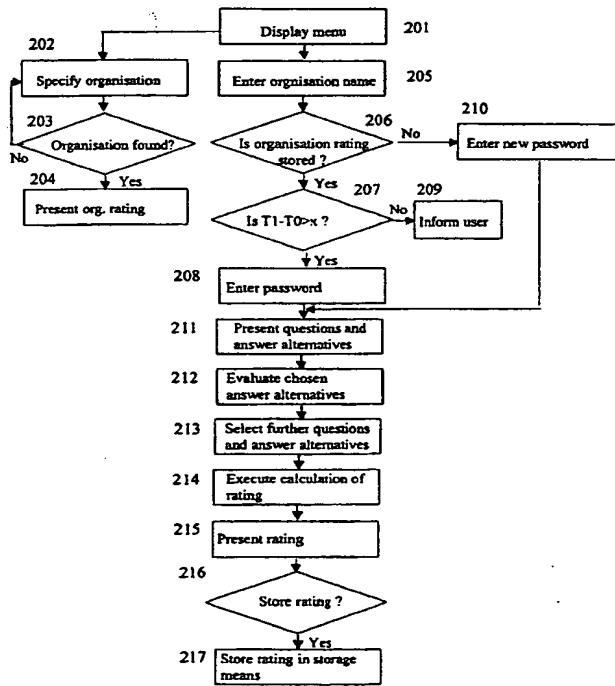
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(54) Title: A DATA PROCESSING SYSTEM FOR RATING AN ORGANISATION OR ORGANISATION UNIT



(57) Abstract: A data processing system for rating at least a unit of an organisation with regard to one or more rating aspects, comprising (a) a computer processor means for processing data, (b) a storage means for storing data on a storage medium, (c) first means (205, 208) for enabling an external user representing said organisation or organisation unit access to a predetermined part of the system via a wide area network, (d) second means (211) for presenting to said external user a first set of questions and answer alternatives concerning said organisation or organisation unit and connected to the one or more rating aspects, (e) third means (212) for establishing an organisation profile based on the answers chosen by said user among said answer alternatives presented to him by said second means (211), (f) fourth means (213) for choosing from a plurality of questions and answer alternatives at least one second set of questions and answer alternatives regarding said organisation or organisation unit and connected to the one or more rating aspects, based on the established profile, (g) fifth means (214) for establishing a rating of the organisation or organisation unit based on the answers chosen by said user among said answer alternatives presented to him by said fourth means (213), and (h) sixth means (203, 303) for making the established rating of the organisation or organisation unit available to external users via the wide area network.

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A data processing system for rating an organisation or organisation unitField of the invention

The present invention relates to a data processing system for rating an organisation or an organisation unit, with regard to one or more rating aspects.

Rating is referred to as defining a value or any kind of marking which reflects the merits of the organisation or organisation unit with regard to certain rating aspects. Such aspects may be of a purely economical type, or of any other relevant type as the case may be.

The term organisation should be regarded in a broad sense and is referred to as any firm, company or institution involved in any commercial activity, offering its products or services to any interested buyer thereof. Organisation unit is referred to as a unit within an organisation.

Background of the invention

In connection to the purchasing of products and services and the conclusion of different business agreements it is of the utmost importance for a buyer to be able to evaluate the merits of a possible producer or provider of services and to make some kind of risk estimation.

It is also important for a buyer to be able to compare different providers of products or services, preferably as many as possible with a minimum of effort and hence a minimum of costs. In order to achieve this a pre-selection of organisations corresponding to some sort of requested profile has to be done. It is thus desirable that such pre-selection and comparison can be done as easily, rapidly and cheaply as possible.

From the providers point of view, that is from the point of view of the one offering his or her products or services, it is of course also important to be observed by possible buyers and, in most cases, to be compared to competitors in the most possible fair and objective way. It is in the interest of the producer to reach as many potential customers as possible with a minimum of effort. If he undertakes any changes in his organisation that makes the latter more attractive, or less attractive, from a buyers point of view, information about such changes should be made available to the buyer with a minimum of effort.

Lately, in a number of cases it has been observed that a purely economical rating of an organisation might not be satisfying for obtaining the total view of the organisation which in many cases would be desirable. It has been particularly observed that environmental and quality aspects are of importance, for example in connection to public purchasing in which a public institution or the like is to purchase the products or services from any organisation and has to compare different organisations and choosing among them the one most suitable.

Object of the invention

The object of the present invention is to provide a data processing system that will facilitate purchasing in the sense that it will make it possible for any organisation or organisation unit to get an objective rating as to certain rating aspects through a declaration made by any one representing that organisation or organisation unit, and to make that rating easily available to any possible purchaser. The invention shall promote the formation of an open market place on which purchasing can be done with precision and with regard to the rating aspects that are of most importance in each single case.

Summary of the invention

The object of the invention is achieved by means of the initially defined data processing system, which comprises

- (a) a computer processor means for processing data,
- (b) a storage means for storing data on a storage medium,
- (c) first means for enabling an external user representing said organisation or organisation unit access to a predetermined part of the system via a wide area network,
- (d) second means for presenting to said external user a first set of questions and answer alternatives concerning said organisation or organisation unit and connected to the one or more rating aspects,
- (e) third means for establishing an organisation profile based on the answers chosen by said user among said answer alternatives presented to him by said second means,
- (f) fourth means for choosing from a plurality of questions and answer alternatives at least one second set of questions and answer alternatives regarding said organisation or organisation unit and connected to the one or more rating aspects, based on the established profile,
- (g) fifth means for establishing a rating of the organisation or organisation unit based on the answers chosen by said user among said answer alternatives presented to him by said fourth means, and
- (h) sixth means for making the established rating of the organisation or organisation unit available to external users via the wide area network.

Accordingly, a user representing an organisation or organisation unit who wishes to have the organisation or organisation unit rated with regard to the rating aspects considered by the data processing system will have the possibility to connect himself to the system via the network, and, by answering the questions provided by the system, obtain the requested rating. The rating will then be available for possible purchasers via the network and can thus easily be taken in consideration in a purchasing process. The wide area network, WAN, typically comprises the internet.

Only a user meeting certain criteria will get access to the system for the purpose of getting a rating of a certain organisation or organisation unit. The above-mentioned first means are therefor preferably arranged so as to require a given password or the like for the access to the system or to have the rating accepted and made available by the above-mentioned sixth means.

Once taken in use by a plurality of organisations or organisation units, the system will form part of an open market place in which the purchasing of products and services is performed with regard to the rating aspects considered by the system. In particular, environmental and quality aspects are considered by the system.

According to a preferred embodiment of the system said fourth means comprises means for receiving the answers chosen by said user as input variables to the system, and weighing the individual contribution of said answers to the rating value with regard to the profile of the organisation or organisation unit. Thereby, the answer chosen for a specific question may affect the final rating differently depending on which profile the system has established for the organisation or organisation unit based on the answers chosen for the first set of questions provided by the system. Accordingly, the system is designed to take into consideration how important a certain issue is for the rating of an organisation or organisation of a specific profile.

According to another preferred embodiment said fourth means comprises means for receiving the answers chosen by said user as input variables to the system,

defining an interrelationship between the answers chosen, and weighing the individual contribution of said input variables to the rating value with regard to said interrelationship. Thereby, consideration is taken to specific answer patterns, and, depending on the constitution of the pattern in question, the contribution of a certain answer to the final rating may be different for different patterns, i.e. the contribution of a specific answer depends on which answer or answers has or have been chosen for one or more specific further questions. Thereby, a total improvement of the accuracy of the rating may be obtained. Preferably, the features of this embodiment are combined with the features of the aforementioned embodiment in which consideration is also taken to the individual organisation profile for determining the contribution of the chosen answer to the rating.

According to a further development of the system said sixth means comprises a search motor, accessible via the network and by means of which only the ratings of organisations or organisation units the profile of which corresponds to a requested profile are presented to a user of the system requesting such an organisation profile. Thereby, it will be possible for a purchaser to induce a pre-selection of organisations or organisation units that might be interesting to compare with each other.

Preferably, the search motor comprises means for presenting for a network user connected to the system, e.g. a purchaser, the alternative profiles available through the inventive system, thereby making it easier for the user to make the pre-selection of organisations to be further considered during a purchasing process.

As an alternative or supplement to the above feature, the search motor may comprise

means for presenting a set of questions and answer alternatives corresponding to or identical with the ones presented by said second means, and means for receiving as input data the answers chosen by a user and for defining a requested profile therefrom.

Further features and advantages of the present invention are defined in the following detailed description and in the appended claims.

Brief description of the drawings

Fig. 1 is a schematic view indicating the information paths between the data processing system according to the invention and users via a WAN connection.

Fig. 2 is a flow chart showing a software routine executed by the data processing system for the purpose of producing a rating based on input from an internet user connected to the system.

Fig. 3 is a flow chart showing a routine in the system.

Fig. 4 is a further flow chart showing a routine in the system.

Detailed description of preferred embodiments

Fig. 1 is a schematic view showing possible information paths between users or clients 101,102 connected to the data processing system 103 according to the invention via a wide area network, WAN, 104. The users or clients 101,102 typically comprise personal computers or the like operated by human operators and provided with means for connecting them to the network 104.

The data processing system comprises a computer processor means 105, typically a personal computer or a server including a CPU, for processing data. It also comprises a storage means 106, typically a data disk, for storing data on a storage medium. For the purpose of initialising the storage medium, the system preferably comprises any arithmetic circuit configured to prepare the data disk to magnetically store selected data.

The computer processor means 105 comprises a plurality of arithmetic logic circuits defining software routines for executing the inventive rating of organi-

sations or organisation units upon reception of input data from any one of the users 101,102. Particularly, there are software routines, for presenting pre-determined questions and corresponding answer alternatives to a user 101,102, for treating input data that corresponds to the answer alternatives chosen by the user 101,102 for the purpose of presenting a relevant rating based thereon, and for making such a rating available for any user 101,102 connected to the data processing system 103 via the network 104. The system comprises at least one arithmetic circuit for retrieving data from the storage means. In particular, such a circuit is configured to retrieve data for the purpose of presenting questions and answer alternatives to the user 101,102. Data defining a plurality of relevant questions and answer alternatives with regard to the relevant rating aspects are stored in the data storage means 106.

Fig. 2 is a flow chart showing the basic operative steps performed by the data processing system according to the invention for the purpose of executing the rating of an organisation or organisation unit represented by the user 101,102.

In the menu box 201 the user 101,102 can choose to retrieve a rating for any organisation or organisation unit already stored in the storage means. Therefore a specification for the organisation or organisation unit the rating of which is desired is asked for in the specify organisation box 202. The existence of a rating for the specified organisation or organisation unit is then checked, box 203. If a rating of the organisation specified is stored in the storage means the rating will be presented to the user asking for it, box 204. If not, the system will give him the message that there is no such rating available and direct him back to the specify organisation box 202.

As an alternative presented in the menu box 201 the user is offered the possibility to have the organisation or organisation unit that he represents rated with regard to the rating aspects considered by the inventive data system. If this alternative is chosen, organisation data is to be entered, box 205. It is then checked whether a rating of that organisation is already existent in the storage means, box 206. If such a rating exists, the system is configured to check how long time has lapsed since the previous rating was entered into the storage

means, box 207. If the time lapsed exceeds a predetermined time, the rating process is continued and the user is asked to enter a password to get access to the part of the system executing the rating, box 208. If the time lapsed is shorter than the predetermined time, the user is informed of this fact and that, therefore, no rating is allowed at the moment, box 209.

If in box 206 it is found that there is no prior existing rating of the specified organisation or organisation unit, the user has to define a new password, box 210.

In box 211 an arithmetic logic circuit of the system is configured to present to said external user a first set of questions and answer alternatives concerning said organisation or organisation unit and connected to the one or more rating aspects. The set of questions and answer alternatives are retrieved from the above mentioned storage means in which they are stored.

In a subsequent step, box 212, the answer alternatives chosen by the user are treated for the purpose of establishing a profile for the organisation or organisation unit. For this purpose the system comprises at least one arithmetic logic circuit configured to execute a software routine in which consideration is taken to the chosen answer alternatives for defining an organisation profile.

The system also comprises means, an arithmetic logic circuit, for retrieving a second set of further questions and answer alternatives from the storage means, box 213. The retrieval is based on the profile previously defined in box 212. Accordingly a predetermined second set of questions and answer alternatives are retrieved and presented to the user depending on the previously chosen answer alternatives. The aim is to keep the number of questions required at a minimum and hence save time and effort.

In a subsequent step, box 214, the answers alternative chosen by the user are treated by an arithmetic logic circuit, which is configured so as to define a software routine by means of which the rating of the organisation or organisation unit is established based on the chosen answer alternatives. Here, consideration

is also taken to the relevant profile previously specified, i.e. consideration is also taken to the first set of answers given by the user. The logic circuit is preferably configured to receive the answers chosen by said user as input variables to the system, defining an interrelationship between the answers chosen, and weighing the individual contribution of said input variables to the rating value with regard to said interrelationship.

The rating is then presented to the user, box 215, who will have the possibility to choose whether he wants to have it saved in the storage means and thereby made available to other users of the system, box 216.

If the user accepts to have the rating stored and made available to other users of the system, the rating is stored in the storage means, box 217.

Fig. 3 shows a possible further development of the inventive data processing system in which the system comprises a software routine for presenting the rating of organisations and organisation units based on a profile alternative chosen by a user, box 302. Accordingly a basic search motor is defined, which checks whether there are any organisations with profiles corresponding to the one chosen by the user stored in the storage means 106, box 303. If not, a new alternative profile may be entered, box 302. Otherwise a list of ratings of organisations meeting the profile requirement will be presented to the user, box 304.

Fig. 4 shows a further development of the search function described with reference to fig. 3. Here, the system comprises means for presenting a set of questions and answer alternatives, box 402, corresponding to or identical with the ones presented in the first set of questions and answer alternatives described with regard to fig. 2, and means for receiving the answers chosen by a user and for defining a requested profile therefrom, box 403. Such means comprises any suitable arithmetic logic circuit configured to these objects.

Accordingly a basic search motor is defined, which checks whether there are any organisations with profiles corresponding to the one chosen by the user stored in the storage means 106, box 404. If there are no data stored in the

storage means 106 for any organisation meeting the profile requirement, the user may choose another, second best profile, for example, as indicated, through the routine described with reference to fig. 3, box 302. Otherwise a list of ratings of organisations meeting the profile requirement will be presented to the user, box 405.

It should be emphasised that, although the inventive system could comprise an economical rating of organisations, it is particularly focused on environmental and quality aspects. Therefor, the invention presents a rating that will give purchasers a supplementary information about a possible producer or provider of services as to environmental and quality aspects.

Of course, a plurality of alternative embodiments will be obvious for a man skilled in the art, however without going beyond the scope of protection as claimed in the appended claims supported by the description and the drawings.

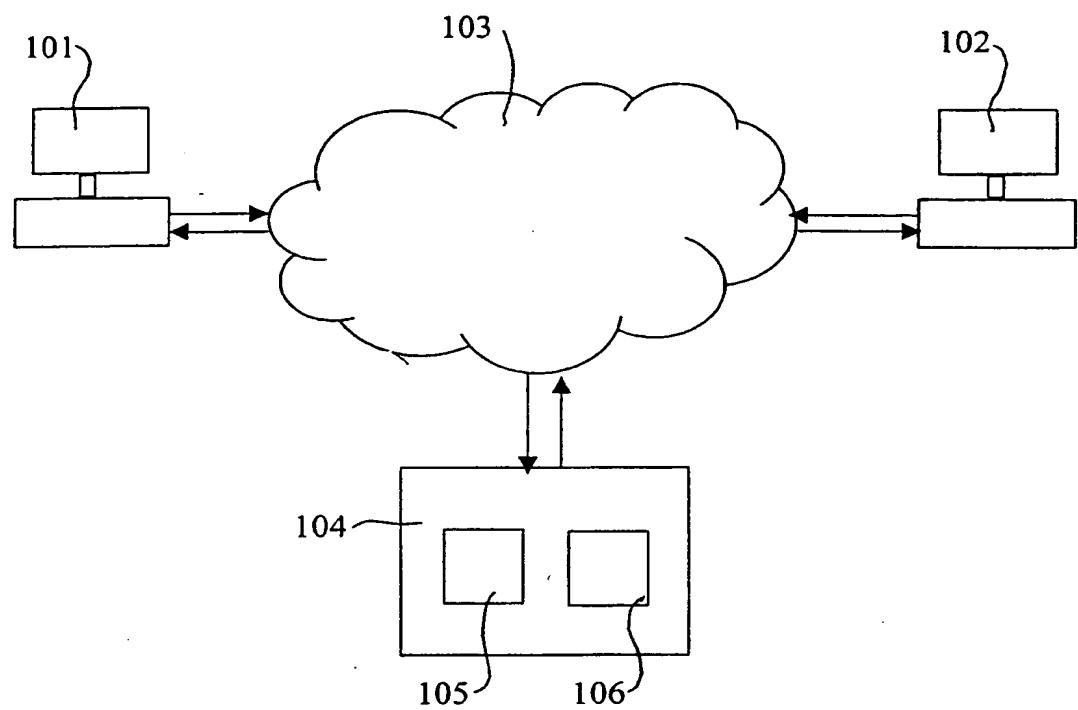
Claims

1. A data processing system for rating at least a unit of an organisation with regard to one or more rating aspects, comprising
 - (a) a computer processor means (105) for processing data,
 - (b) a storage means (106) for storing data on a storage medium,
 - (c) first means (205,208) for enabling an external user representing said organisation or organisation unit access to a predetermined part of the system via a wide area network (103),
 - (d) second means (211) for presenting to said external user a first set of questions and answer alternatives concerning said organisation or organisation unit and connected to the one or more rating aspects,
 - (e) third means (212) for establishing an organisation profile based on the answers chosen by said user among said answer alternatives presented to him by said second means (211),
 - (f) fourth means (213) for choosing from a plurality of questions and answer alternatives at least one second set of questions and answer alternatives regarding said organisation or organisation unit and connected to the one or more rating aspects, based on the established profile,
 - (g) fifth means (214) for establishing a rating of the organisation or organisation unit based on the answers chosen by said user among said answer alternatives presented to him by said fourth means (213), and
 - (h) sixth means (203,303) for making the established rating of the organisation or organisation unit available to external users via the wide area network.

2. A data processing system according to claim 1, **characterised in** that said fourth means (213) comprises means for receiving the answers chosen by said user as input variables to the system, and weighing the individual contribution of said answers to the rating value with regard to the profile of the organisation or organisation unit.
3. A data processing system according to claim 1, **characterised in** that said fourth means (213) comprises means for receiving the answers chosen by said user as input variables to the system, defining an interrelationship between the answers chosen, and weighing the individual contribution of said input variables to the rating value with regard to said interrelationship.
4. A data processing system according to claim 1, **characterised in** that it comprises means (207) for preventing the rating of the organisation or organisation unit from being updated through data input via the network more frequently than at a predetermined maximum frequency.
5. A data processing system according to claim 1, **characterised in** that said sixth means (203,303) comprises a search motor, accessible via the network and by means of which only the ratings of organisations or organisation units the profile of which corresponds to a requested profile are presented to a user of the system requesting such an organisation profile.
6. A data processing system according to claim 5, **characterised in** that said search motor (203,303) comprises means for presenting for a user connected to the system via the network the profile alternatives available.
7. A data processing system according to claim 5, **characterised in** that said search motor (203,303) comprises means for presenting a set of questions and answer alternatives corresponding to or identical with the ones presented by said second means (211), and means for receiving the answers chosen by a user and for defining a requested profile therefrom.

8. A data processing system according to claim 1, **characterised in** that the storage means (106) are arranged so as to store the last updated ratings of organisations or organisation units established by the system, making it available for said sixth means (203,303) at any time.

9. A data processing system according to claim 1, **characterised in** that the rating aspects comprise environmental and/or quality aspects and the rating is a rating reflecting the environmental and quality merits of an organisation or organisation unit.

**FIG. 1**

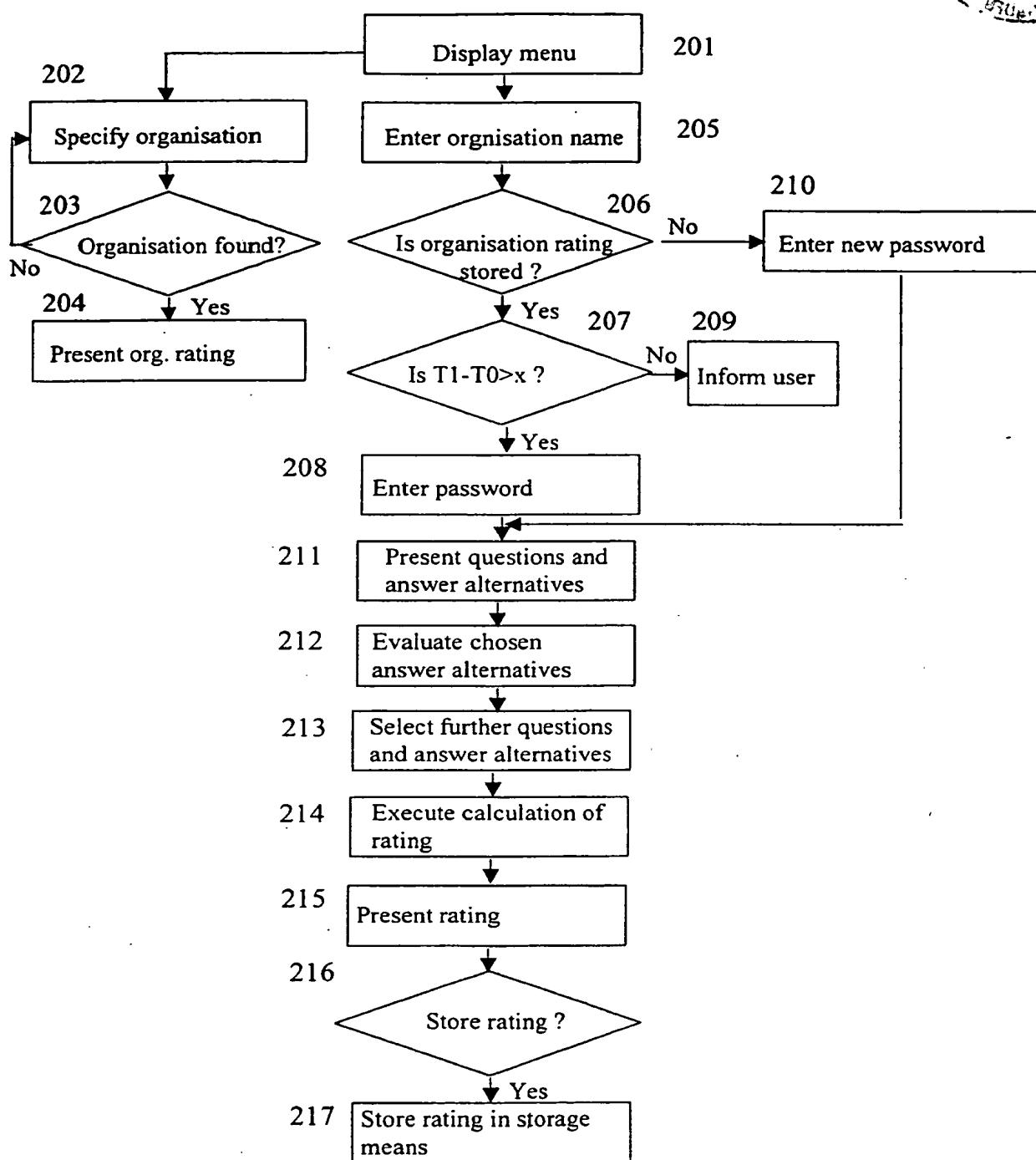
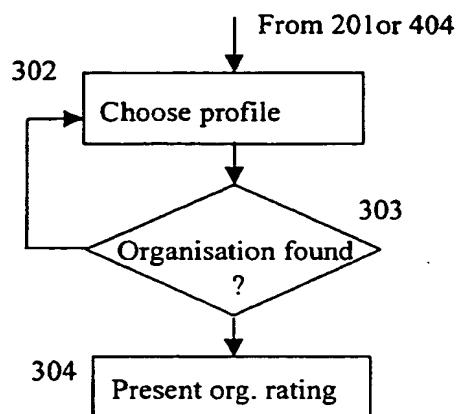
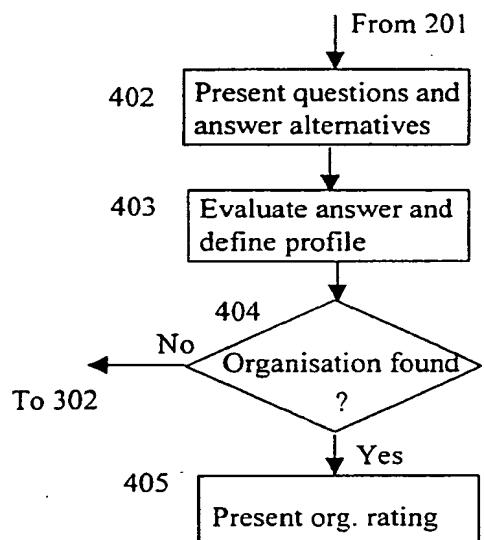


FIG. 2

**FIG. 3****FIG. 4**